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ABSTRACT

Part of an exploratory project inquiring into causes and consequences of parent participation, a study was undertaken to identify possible reasons for differences in the extent parents become involved in their children's preschool. The study was conducted at the Lady Gowrie Child Centre in Adelaide, Australia, a center promoting optimum physical and mental health among preschool children from low income, multicultural areas and needing parent participation to maintain its programs. Administered across three terms to three different samples, a total of four questionnaires were employed to ascertain the extent to which parents were involved at the center and to obtain measures of factors thought to be related to involvement. These factors were parents' (1) attitudes toward child development; (2) attitudes toward parent involvment in education; (3) personality; and (4) background, experience, and apparent availability of time. Results indicated that parents were involved in 2 to 36 different ways and varied widely in the amount of time they participated. Of several factors thought to bear on the degree of parental involvement, only two were statistically significant: mothers previously involved spent more time involved, and mothers in paid employment spent less time involved. It was concluded that the question of why parents become involved to differing degrees remains unanswered. (Appended are questionnaires used and additional findings not reported in the text.) (RH)

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN THE LADY GOWRIE CHILD CENTRE, ADELAIDE, 1981

An exploratory study into why parents become involved to differing degrees in their children's early childhood centre

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Mrs. M. Winch was employed by Dr. Russell through a Flinders University Research Budget Grant and assisted in the administration of questionnaires in Term I and drafted the analysis of the questionnaire in Term II. Access to the computer was also made available through Dr. Russell.

Mrs. P. Wark and Mrs. K. Chase assisted with the background information and Mrs. Chase designed the computer programmes.

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INTRODUCTION

The Lady Gowrie Child Centre, Adelaide (the Centre) is one of the six such Centres in Australia. It was established in 1940 as an experiment in "promoting optimum physical and mental health" (Ruddock, 1966, p.4) among pre-school children in the needy areas not served by the free kindergartens of the day.

The Centre caters for the well-being of children in the 0 - 6 year old age group through a variety of programmes including Parent-Child-Teacher Groups (playgroups), programmes for 2 - 4 year olds and older pre-school children. Day care and occasional care are available and children with "special needs" are welcomed.

The Centre also has an "open-door" policy towards parents, who can accompany their children and stay for part or whole of the session. Some parents assist in the nurseries - some on roster, some not. Others come forward on special occasions such as Easter, Christmas, or excursions. Others give of their time helping in tne kitchen or assisting the teacher at lunch time when a meal is served to the children - and the parents, if they wish. Others serve on the Parents' Committee, which raises funds and arranges social activities. Those who wish to be involved in policy decision making may represent the parents on the Management Committee, or join the teacher in evaluation and planning sessions at the nursery level. Some may wish to extend their knowledge of children or their personal skills and special meetings or classes of various kinds are arranged on topics of interest, often requested, ranging from child behaviour to cooking.

The Parents' Room, with its library, changing facilities, television, coffee bar and sewing machine, is a popular venue for others. Parents have also shown willingness to assist non-teaching staff, e.g. with shopping and typing - or attending research interviews!

This outline gives some indication that parents are welcomed and catered for at the L.G.C.C. - in fact the Centre could not function in its present fashion without their assistance. It becomes very important, then, to find out as much as possible about why parents become involved, and why some become more involved than others.

This project explores possible reasons why parents may become involved in varying degrees in their children's pre-school.

LITERATURE SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

The 1970s saw an increase in interest in parental involvement worldwide as the benefits to the parents and child became known from studies of the American Head Start programmes. Another factor contributing to this interest was increasing "consumerism", i.e. a desire to have some control in the facilities that are provided for the taxpayers' children and largely paid for with the taxpayers' money. In Australia, parental involvement was also stimulated by the example of the New Zealand Play Centre movement and other overseas programmes for pre-school children in which parents were involved.

The last decade also saw a change in emphasis in parental involvement in Australia. Up to this time, parents had been generally limited to settling the child, fundraising activities and parent education classes of various types which were basically designed to impart the expertise of the professionals (teachers) to the parents. This emphasis changed to parents and teachers working together as partners (Fountain, 1978). One consequence of this has been a growing respect for the different roles of parents and teachers and recognition of the necessity for parents to be parental (Willis, 1980; Katz, 1982). Another consequence has been an increase in the types of activities in which parents are involved, although this varies from place to place (Ebbeck, 1979).

For the purpose of this study, only one aspect of parent involvement will be considered, viz, why different parents become involved in the pre-school to differing degrees. There has been considerably more research done on parent involvement in schools, rather than pre-schools, from which inferences can possibly be made to the pre-schools, but that is beyond the scope of this survey which will deal with research directly related to pre-schools.

From the Literature

From an extensive examination of the literature it can be seen that parental involvement is one facet of a dual relationship between the pre-school and the parents. The attitude of the pre-school staff and the communication of this attitude are essential ingredients in the success of this relationship. In a study of 15 pre-schools in Oxfordshire, U.K., those parents who were not involved turned out to be those who were in paid employment and immigrant parents. Smith felt that this was not just a matter of unsurmounted language barriers, but a neglect on the part of most of the groups to explain their

aims and methods to parents and a lack of consideration being given to make involvement relevant to mothers in paid employment or parents with a poor command of English (Smith, 1980). The striking differences in approach to parents originated therefore not from the differences in parents, but the differences in staff attitudes - the attitude of the "professional" teacher to one who was in "partnership" with the parents. If parents are really wanted at the pre-school, this must be clearly communicated in actions as well as words. This principle also applies to day care centres or pre-schools offering day care (Sebastian, 1981).

One way of making sure that parents know they are welcome and their contribution valued is to make involvement compulsory, as is done in the Community Co-operative Nursery at Menlo Park (U.S.) among other places. Here parents are deeply involved, both in the classroom and meeting programme. The penalty for non-involvement is that the child is dropped from the school. Few are dropped (American Institutes for Research, 1970). There is more behind this, though, than just compulsory versus voluntary involvement, even if compulsory involvement was always appropriate or desirable. (1) Attendance at that pre-school is not compulsory and parents must have perceived that the education provided was valuable to their children at least, if not to themselves, or the children would not be attending. This brings us to a consideration of the parents' role in the pre-school - parent dyad.

Smith has pointed out that time is an essential ingredient in becoming involved with the pre-school - hence the mothers in paid employment in that study were not involved in the pre-schools. Mothers who are not limited in such ways are evidently prepared to make time if they perceive that they can help the child, that their contribution will be important and if their most pressing needs are met, e.g. through welfare agencies (Braithwaite and Healy, 1979; Work, 1972; Dermy, 1979; McDonald, 1969).

In the Mt. Druitt Early Childhood Project, pre-school education began in the home and group sessions came later (Braithwaite and Healy, 1979). An example of how the professional-parent partnership can work is shown in the special study sessions which were run in response to a need, expressed by the parents and met by the professionals, for particular courses on subjects relating to the development or handling of the children. Here the parents could see the relevance of the group to their own needs and support for the study groups was strong. Other researchers have also recommended such parent education groups to start with parents own interests and not what educators think that they should be interested in (Work, 1972; Burdon, 1979). However the extent to which response to the parents' needs has

effected their degree of involvement has not been measured, apparently, but inferred from observation.

One South Australian study which may throw light on why parents become involved at pre-schools was made at the L.G.C.C., Adelaide, in 1979. The results suggested that those parents who, "...showed higher involvement in the Centre were somewhat more oriented to emotional and personal characteristics (being able to express love and affection, being sensitive to others' needs and feelings) than parents with low involvement". (Russell, 1980, p.7)

It was not known whether this was a characteristic of the parents originally or whether they had become sensitised to these aspects through contact with the Centre, but it was possible that parents, "..who gain enjoyment from social activities and feel able and competent in social relationships may be more inclined to be involved". (Russell, 1980, p.8)

More research is needed before this could be more than a tentative conclusion, but others have noticed social links affecting involvement. Johnson reported, "...notable success in involving parents in classrooms with their children when such efforts were made in the second year of the programme after an initial year of home visitation with parents". (Honig, 1975, p.34)

The preceding paragraphs suggest that the personality of the parent may be related to the degree of involvement. It has also been postulated that there needs to be a variety of ways in which a parent can be involved at a Centre to suit individual needs and interests. Except for Smith's work, no study has been found to support such a claim, but information will be available on why parents select some activities rather than others when the "Parent Involvement in Education" interview of the present study is available for publication (see p. 7 and 8).

In summary, the professional-parent partnership requires good communication, realism, relevance, practicality and sincerity on the one hand and time, freedom from pressing anxieties, perception of value and importance of their contribution and possibly comfort in social situations on the other.

AIMS

This study is part of an exploratory project which inquires into the causes and consequences of parent involvement at the L.G.C.C. (Adelaide). The present report seeks to establish,

1) the extent to which parents are involved at the Centre, and
2) why some parents become more involved than others - looking only at the parent aspect of the parent-professional dyad.

It was thought that some reasons why parents might differ in their degree of involvement might be,

1) they have different attitudes to child development -
   e.g. parents who felt that they were highly influential in their children's development might maximise their involvement at the Centre to further that development. The opposite might also apply.

2) they have different attitudes to parent involvement in education,
   e.g. parents who believed that parents should be involved in their children's education would be likely to spend as much time as they could in furthering that education, either directly or indirectly. A parent who believed that education was the responsibility of the teacher was considered less likely to be highly involved at the Centre.

3) they have differing personalities,
   competent, outgoing people i.e. those who felt that they were in control of their life, were thought to be more likely to be involved in their children's pre-school education than those who felt that their lives were swayed by circumstances beyond their control.

4) they have different backgrounds and experiences
   It is well established that the past has a strong influence on the present in behavioural terms. Ethnic background, socio-economic status, prior work experience at the Centre or length of contact with the Centre were thought to be areas of life in the past that could be influencing present involvement,
   e.g. (a) If it was not culturally acceptable for women to have interests outside the home, involvement could be reasonably expected to be low.
   (b) Parents who felt that their beliefs and attitudes were generally held by the staff at the Centre could feel more at home and be more involved than parents whose social attitudes were at variance with those of the Centre.

(c) New parents might feel strange at first and want to "find their feet" before becoming involved, whereas those who were familiar with the people and their customs and expectations might feel more relaxed and be more likely to participate.

5) <u>they have differing amounts of time to spend in such activities</u>

This is essentially a practical consideration. Various factors limit the time available to parents of pre-schoolers and could be expected to limit their involvement e.g.

- the number of children they have,
- whether these children include infants, or
- whether some go to school. As well as changing the type of demands on a parent the school could well be another area competing for the parent's time,
- paid employment places regular demands on a parent's time,
- children in day care could indicate a special area of need, apart from care of the child during paid employment, e.g. the need for time for themselves. In such a case involvement might not be high.
- whether the child is classified as being in "special need", e.g. handicapped in some way or a behaviour problem. Such parents could spend much time at the Centre with their child, or the opposite may apply.
- the distance the family lives from the Centre might be an important factor. It is less disruptive to the mother's day to e.g. stay for part of the morning if she just lives around the corner. On the other hand, a very distant mother might stay throughout the session because it is not "worth going home".

It is recognised that some of the factors listed above may be interrelated and may differentiate between the emphases placed by parents on aspects of child development and education as assessed by the Interview Schedule No. 2, and these relationships will be examined. Some factors, (e.g. the type of ethnic background of the parent) bear a higher probability of such an interrelationship than others (e.g. the distance they live from the Centre), but in this exploratory stage no exceptions will be made.

DESIGN

INSTRUMENTS USED

1. To Ascertain the Extent to which Parents were Involved at the Centre

A questionnaire, Parents at the L.G.C.C., Adelaide was designed at the Centre to measure the frequency and duration of parent involvement (see Appendix VI). The definition of involvement was wide, ranging from settling the child and talking to other parents to committee and roster work.

The questionnaire was completed by the parents at the end of 1981. It was the only questionnaire that parents could fill out for themselves if they wished. All selected this option and some completed it at home and others at the Centre, although some preferred the Research Associate to be present to answer queries. This method was originally adopted because of time pressures but the flexibility was convenient to the parents and widely commented on.

Throughout the year a record was kept of parent involvement at the Centre and used as a reliability check on the accuracy of a sample of the questionnaire. The teachers were also consulted as they kept a record of aspects of nursery involvement. A reliability of over 92% was found between the parents' answers, the records and the teachers' observations and records.

2. To Obtain Measures of Factors Thought to Relate to Involvement

a) Attitudes to Child Development

The attitudes of the parents towards child development were assessed in Term I using the Interview Schedule No. 2 designed by Drs. A. and G. Russell (Appendix I). This questionnaire requires parents to indicate the degree which they think that they have an influence over various aspects of child development, similarly to indicate how much influence the teacher has over the same aspects of child development and finally to indicate how much emphasis they (the parents) place on such aspects in the upbringing of their children. The scale has 65 items which are considered separately as there is no overall score.

b) Attitudes to Parent Involvement in Education

In Term II, an open ended questionnaire was used on Parent Involvement in Education (Appendix III). This questionnaire

had been designed and trialled at the Centre and allowed parents to express in their own words what part they felt that they and the teachers played in their children's education at pre-school level and at school. They were also asked in what ways they wanted to be involved at the L.G.C.C. or at school, whether they were satisfied with the range of involvement opportunities available at both places and whether they felt welcome. Experience of involvement at the school level was taken into account by asking whether or not they had children at school. An important part of the questionnaire was concerned with the parents' reasons for involvement or lack of involvement in a variety of activities. This questionnaire will be analysed separated, but it was found that parents differed in their attitudes towards education and their involvement in it and could be classified into four groups on this basis (see p. 19). The present study utilises these groupings to see whether beliefs about parent involvement relate to level of involvement at the Centre.

c) Personality

The J.B. Rotter I/E Scale (Appendix II) was administered in Term I. The parents were required to make a choice between alternative answers and select in each case the answer which best represented their own beliefs on problems designed to show how much influence they think that chance or luck has in their lives, or how much control they believe they have over their lives. Persons who score highly (out of 23) believe in External control over their destiny and low scorers believe in Internal control. Six of the items were "fillers" to disguise the nature of the test.

d) Parental Background, Experience and Apparent Availability of Time

Factual background information relevant to the study was obtained from the Centre records and the introductions to the Centre-designed questionnaires and is detailed in the description of the sample (see p.11 to 15).

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Three methods of analysis were used viz,

1. Correlation - using Pearsons Rho. A score greater than +0.5 and less than -0.5 was accepted as showing a degree of correlation.

2. Significant difference - using the chi-squared test. Only significances less than or equal to 0.05 were accepted.

3. Average mean frequency

In multiple choice questionnaires each choice was given a numerical value. The frequency with which each number was chosen was then multiplied by its numerical value and the average mean frequency calculated.

e.g. Given the table (from the computer printout)

		Time spent in involvement			
		Highly Involved	Involved	Little Involved	Total
Mother in paid employment	Yes	20	16	10	46
	No	1	1	7	9

Chi-squared sig. = 0.0039

- The columns are then allocated a number
- The frequency is then multiplied by this number
- The new across-the-row total is summed and divided by the total in each category to give the average mean frequency for the row

The table then becomes -

		Time spent in involvement			
		Highly Involved	Involved	Little Involved	
		1	2	3	
Mother in paid employment	Yes	20x1 = 20	16x2 = 32	10x3 = 30	$\frac{20+32+30}{46} = 1.7826$
	No	1x1 = 1	1x2 = 2	7x3 = 21	$\frac{1+2+21}{9} = 2.666$

Chi-squared sig. = 0.0039

From this it can be reasoned that mothers who are in paid employment (average mean frequency = 1.7826) spend less time in involvement than parents who are not in paid employment (average mean frequency = 2.666).

THE PARENTS INTERVIEWED

NUMBER IN THE SAMPLE

1. Term I ("Interview Schedule No. 2" and "J.B. Rotter I/E Scale")
As the parents in the final interview had to have been present all the year the initial questionnaires were administered to as many people as possible.

110 parents, the ones in each family who were most involved with the child's day to day care, were interviewed. This left 14 families unrepresented as they were absent or not available for interview. Only the three aboriginal families at the Centre fell into the latter category and, although home visits were contemplated, it was decided not to attempt them as they could be too threatening.

110 parents represent 89% of the Centre's population. This high percentages arises from the parents' understanding and acceptance of the research role of the Centre. Indeed, each parent signs a consent form pledging their co-operation and giving permission for their children to be involved (Appendix V).

Of the 110 parents interviewed -

101 were mothers
6 were fathers
2 were grandmothers, and
1 was an aunt

2. Term II ("Parent Involvement in Education")
For this questionnaire, a sample of the Centre's population was interviewed, all of whom had to have been included in the Term I sample. In all, 41 parents were seen, 35 of whom were mothers. Care was taken in selection -

(a) to preserve a balance between the programmes at the Centre
(b) to cover all the Centre's activities.

Two people were selected who had and had not been involved in each activity at the Centre)

3. Term III ("Parents at the L.G.C.C., Adelaide")
59 out of 69 possible parents were interviewed, i.e. of those who had been interviewed in Term I. 55 of these were mothers.

Parents were allocated a random three letter number which was their identification on all questionnaires and records. It was felt that this maintained their privacy and aided objectivity.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

It was found during the analysis of the results that there were significant differences between the attitudes to child development and the four degrees of relationship to the child (mother, father, aunt, grandmother) although the numbers in the non-maternal category were too small for the test to be reliable. Analysis proceeded only on the responses of the mothers in the sample as a precaution against complicating the interpretation of the results. The details below, therefore, apply only to the mothers.

1. According to Factors Giving Rise to Differing Background Experiences

(a) Ethnic background

Nationality was determined by place of birth, in accordance with International Law.

There are 15 different nationalities represented in the sample. Aborigines are the only group at the Centre who could not be interviewed (see p.10).

The biggest group is the "Australian", which made up 65% of the sample in Term I and 71% in Term III, i.e. 54% (71%).

It is recognised that in our multicultural society that this group incorporates those of diverse races and ethnic influences but it was not possible to gauge the relative effects of these.

TABLE I

NATIONALITY	Term I	Term III *
Australian	66	39
Greek	6	2
Italian	1	-
Dutch	1	-
United Kingdom	11	8
Yugoslavian	4	3
Papuan	1	1
Vietnamese	3	1
Maltese	1	-
New Zealand	1	-
French	2	-
German	1	1
Finnish	1	-
Irish	1	-
Lebanese	1	-
Turkish	1	-
	101	55

* These numbers mean the number of parents left in the first term categories. They are not representative of the population of the Centre in Term III.

A relatively small percentage of the parents, 22% (15% in Term 3) had come from non-English speaking countries but most had a reasonable command of English. Interpreters were needed for only 6 (1 in Term 3) parents.

(b) Socio-economic Status

Socio-economic status was obtained by dividing the fathers' occupations into nine categories adapted from O'Donohue's categories (1979), which in turn were selected from the broad categories used by the Bureau of Census and Statistics.

TABLE 2

	FATHERS' OCCUPATIONS	
	Term I	Term III
Professional/Executive	27	17
Self employed	11	9
Clerical	6	2
Skilled	18	12
Semi-skilled	3	-
Unskilled	11	5
Student	2	1
Unemployed	5	3
Not applicable (single/ separated etc.)	18	6
	101	55

The L.G.C.C., Adelaide is in a low income, multicultural area, yet the largest group of the fathers were in professional/ executive positions. However, as will be seen, only 39% of the population of the L.G.C.C. at that time actually came from the local area (Table 7, p.15) and 85% of those in professional/ exeuctive positions came from outside the district. (1)

A section of the sample (18%) were not able to be classified according to the fathers' occupations, mainly because the parents had separated or the mother was single. (2)

(c) Length of Contact with the Centre

The length of contact with the Centre was calculated from the time of the first enrolment up to 1st March, 1981, excluding holidays and periods when the parents had no children at the Centre. Contact, therefore, need not have been continuous. As can be seen from the table, the majority of the parents are in their first year of contact with the Centre, whereas others have had 3+ years of contact.

TABLE 3

LENGTH OF CONTACT WITH THE CENTRE

Time in Months	Term I	Term III *
0 - 5	40	23
6 - 11	15	10
12 - 17	14	5
18 - 23	4	2
24 - 29	9	5
30 - 35	3	2
36 or more	16	8
	101	55

* The length of time has not been recalculated in Term III. These numbers mean the number of parents left in the Term I categories.

(d) Prior Work Experience at the L.G.C.C.

The example of work experience chosen was roster duty in the Parent-Teacher Co-operative. In this nursery, a parent and teacher worked together, with the parent on fortnightly roster. Only parents whose children are in that nursery are approached for roster duty.

TABLE 4

MOTHER ON CO-OPERATIVE'S ROSTER '79 OR '80?

	Term I	Term III
Yes	7	3
No	11	6
Not applicable	83	46
	101	55

2. According to Factors Effecting the Time Available to the Parent for Involvement with the Centre

(a) Number of Children in the Family

Although the number of children in each family ranged from 1 to 4, most families had two children.

TABLE 5

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

No. of Children	Term I	Term III
One	29	18
Two	52	31
Three	16	5
Four	4	1
	101	55

(b) Number of Pre-School Children

The majority of families had only one pre-school child.

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

No. of Children	Term I
One	57
Two	42
Three	2
	101

(c) Number of Infants (i.e. pre-Centre age children) in the Family

The number of infants in the family was only calculated in Term III. It is a better measure of committed time than the number of pre-school children as some of these are at the L.G.C.C. There were 15 families with an infant in the sample and 39 without.

(d) The Number of School Children in the Family

This, too, was only calculated in Term III, when there were 16 families with school age children and 39 without in the sample.

(e) "Special Needs" Children

"Special needs" children need special attention. There were 10 families with a "special needs" child in the first term sample and 7 families in third term.

(f) Mothers in Paid Employment

There were 18 mothers in paid employment either full or part time in the first term sample and 9 in third term.

(g) Mothers Using Day Care

Of the 9 mothers whose children were in day care in the third term sample, only two were in paid employment - one full time and one part time. Use of day care facilities, therefore, is by no means exclusive to such parents.

(h) Distance from the Centre

Distance from the Centre was divided into three categories, Local, Adjacent and Distant. Those who came from the Thebarton Local Government Area were classified as Local. When another pre-school centre was bypassed so that the child could attend the L.G.C.C., the classification became Adjacent or Distant.[3] Some parents travelled over 10 km to bring their children to the Centre and some of the non-locals were dependent on public transport.

TABLE 7

DISTANCE FROM THE CENTRE

	No. of Families	
	Term I	Term III
Local	39	22
Adjacent	19	11
Distant	43	22
	101	55

As can be seen from the table above the larger proportion of the families with children at the Centre (61%, 60%) does not come from the local area. This phenomena is discussed elsewhere (O'Donohue, 1979 p.14-15; Lady Gowrie Child Centre 42nd Annual Report, 1982, p.13).

RESULTS

PREAMBLE

The results of

- Interview Schedule No. 2 (differing attitudes to child development),
- J.B. Rotter I/E Scale (personality test)

are to be found in Appendices VIII and IX respectively. They are not presented here as, although interesting in themselves, they are important in this study mainly in seeing how the factors they measure relate to frequency and duration of involvement.

For the sake of being reasonably brief and readable to a wider audience, a summary of the results has been presented here. Further details may be obtained on application to the,

Lady Gowrie Child Centre
39A Dew Street
Thebarton 5031
Adelaide
South Australia

RESULTS (continued)

THE EXTENT OF MATERNAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE CENTRE

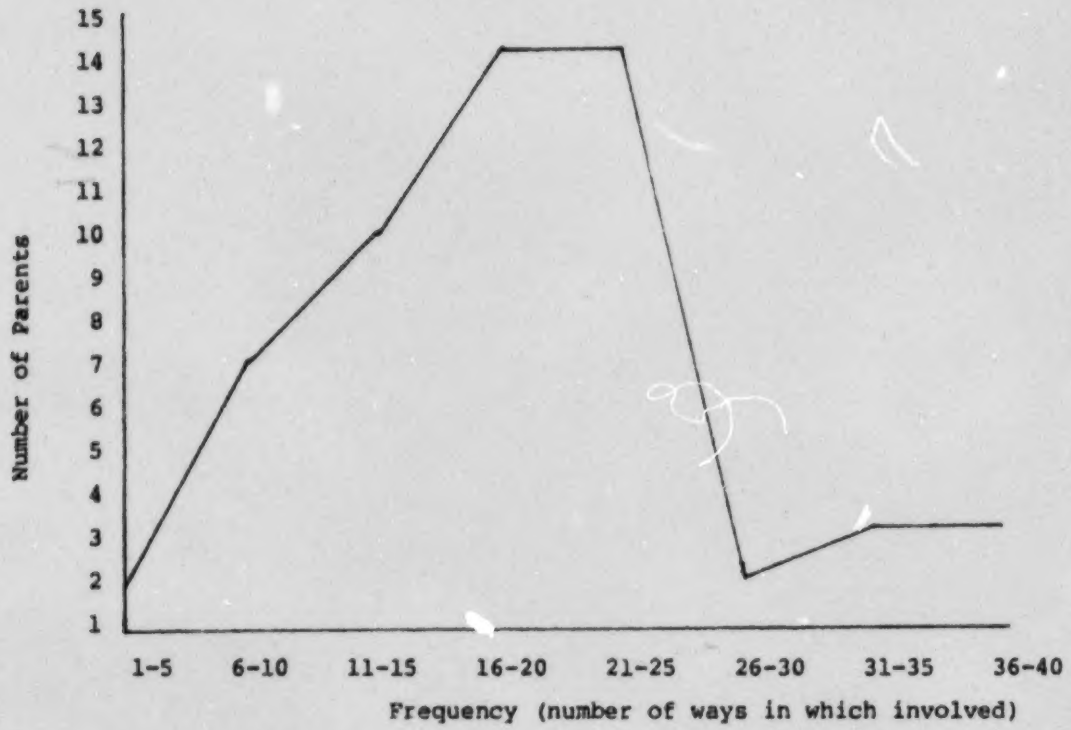
The 55 parents in Term III indicated in which of the 58 activities they had been involved in 1981 and estimated how long their involvement had taken.

The following graphs plot the number of mothers by the frequency and duration of their involvement. Some inflation of results is endemic in the method used, in both cases, as some of the activities overlap, e.g. a parent might bring her child to the nursery, greet the teacher, stay until the child was settled, pop into the kitchen to render some assistance, chat to another mother similarly occupied and return a book to the Parent Library on the way out. This may take e.g. 30 minutes in actual time, but would record as six activities and, as the time would be cumulative rather than concurrent, and would be computed on the maximum time in each category, it would appear as a minimum of 1¼ hours. It is the distribution of frequency and duration of involvement that is in these graphs, therefore and invokes the original question viz, why are there such differences between parents in their degree of involvement?

(a) Frequency of Involvement

GRAPH I

FREQUENCY OF INVOLVEMENT



The parents were placed into three categories of frequency of involvement,

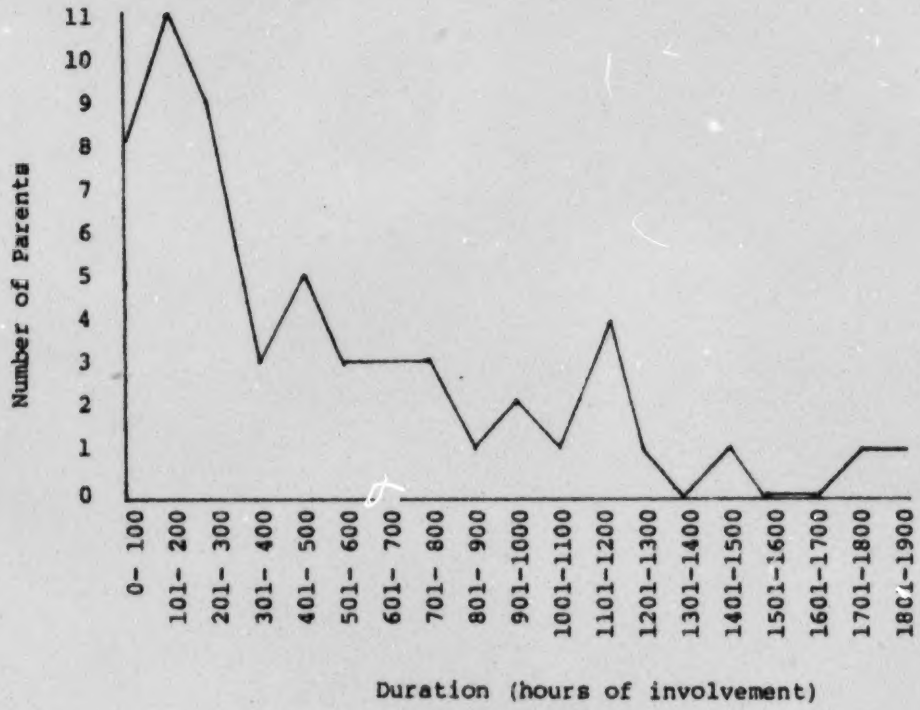
1) highly involved (23-39 activities), n = 14
2) involved (16-22 activities), n = 22
3) little involved (1-15 activities), n = 19

N.B. For the kinds of involvement considered see Appendix III and p. 24.

(b) Duration of Involvement

GRAPH II

DURATION OF INVOLVEMENT



For the purposes of this report, the parents were again divided into three categories of duration of involvement

1) highly involved (500 hours or more), n = 21
2) involved (200-499 hours), n = 17
3) less involved (up to 199 hours), n = 17

(c) Further Ways of Becoming Involved

The parents were also asked if they could suggest any way, other than the 58 listed in the questionnaires, in which they could become involved. 24% of parents could suggest 11 further ways, 4 of which were already on the list. The 7 different ways are listed in Appendix XII.

FACTORS THOUGHT TO RELATE TO THE DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

(a) Differing Attitudes to Child Development (As measured on Interview Schedule No. 2)

Correlation Test

- $\frac{1}{65}$ items on Interview Schedule No. 2 correlated with frequency of involvement.
- No items correlated with duration of involvement.

Chi-Squared List

- $\frac{4}{65}$ items on Interview Schedule No. 2 produced statistically significantly different results (i.e. $\leq .05$) in frequency of involvement.
- $\frac{2}{65}$ items were significantly different as regards duration of involvement.

(b) Differing Attitudes to Parent Involvement in Education (Obtained from analysis of the open-ended questionnaire, "Parent Involvement in Education")

It was found that parents could be classified into four main groups, according to attitudes towards their involvement in education.

Group I - believed that parents played a greater (or at least equal) role in their children's education than did teachers.

Group II - believed that parents played a supportive role that was less than that of teachers.

Group III - regarded education as being solely the teacher's responsibility but felt that parents had a place at the pre-school.

Group IV - felt that parents had no place at the pre-school or school.

Statistical examination showed no significant different between the groups in respect to the frequency and duration of their involvement. The numbers in the groups were small, however, (9, 11, 4 and 4 respectively - one parent denied the possibility of categorisation) and therefore the Chi-squared test tends not to be reliable.

N.B. Group III was most frequently involved

Groups III and IV spent most time at the Centre (see Appendix VII, 1).

("Not reliable" is a phrase that will occur repeatedly in the remainder of this report. It means that little confidence can be placed in the result without a bigger sample.)

(c) Personality

It was found that there was no correlation or significant difference between persons with differing scores on the Rotter I/E Scale and frequency or duration of involvement.

(d) Differing Experiences

Those who had previous work experience at the Centre spent significantly more time in involvement than parents who had not been involved on the roster, although they did not differ from other parents in frequency of involvement.
However, since there were only nine persons involved, the chi-squared test cannot be taken as reliable.
No significant differences, in frequency or duration of involvement were found between those who,

- had differing ethnic backgrounds,
- * needed an interpreter, (6 persons),
- had differing socio-economic status, or
- had varying years of contact with the Centre. (See p.64 & 65 for justification of this item as an independent factor.

* Numbers too small for the chi-squared test to be reliable.

(e) Time Available for Involvement at the Centre

A significant difference was found in the amount of time mothers in paid employment spent in involvement, though not in the frequency with which they were involved. Mothers in paid employment spent significantly less time in involvement than other mothers.
Since there were only nine mothers employed, however, the numbers are too small for the test to be reliable.
(The frequency with which these mothers were involved was also less, but not significantly so).

No significant differences in frequency or duration of involvement were found between persons with,

- differing numbers of children
- infants
- school age children
- "special needs" children
- * children in day care (n = 9)
- varying distances to travel to the Centre.

* Although this result was not significant and the numbers were too small for the test to be reliable, the figures indicated that mothers with children in day care were more involved, both in terms of frequency and duration of involvement, than parents whose children were not in day care.

TABLE 8

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF INVOLVEMENT

Factors thought to relate to involvement	Significant Difference Between Groups of Parents	
	In relation to frequency of involvement	In relation to duration of involvement
Differing attitudes to child development	No	No
Differing attitudes to parent involvement in education	No *	No *
Personality	No	No
Differing experiences		
- ethnic background	No	No
- needed an interpreter	No *	No *
- socio-economic status	No	No
- years of contact with Centre	No	No
- prior work experience at the Centre	No *	Yes *
Time available		
- number of children in the family	No	No
- number of infants	No	No
number of school age children	No	No
- "special needs" children	No *	No *
- mothers in paid employment	No *	Yes *
- children in day care	No *	No *
- distance from the Centre	No	No

* Numbers too small for the chi-squared test to be reliable

INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF FACTORS POSSIBLY EFFECTING INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDES TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT

PREAMBLE

The main question being considered in the project is "Why parents become involved in varying degrees in their children's pre-school education?" It is important that each of the possible reasons be independent from the other - otherwise a clear picture will not emerge.

It would have been theoretically possible to test every factor against every other factor, but this was not feasible from the point of view of time or expense. Therefore, the most likely relationships were tested.

The most likely relationship was between personality and attitudes to child development so this was tested in two ways, i.e. for correlation and significant difference.

The other factors thought to possibly effect involvement were tested to see if they caused significant differences in attitudes towards child development. The results are presented below.

1. Correlation Between Personality and Attitudes to Child Development

   There was no correlation between the scores on the I/E Scale and any item on Interview Schedule No. 2, i.e. in this sample there is no correlation between this measure of personality and attitudes towards child development.

2. Factors Causing Significant Differences in Attitudes Towards Child Development

   The sample was then analysed to see if there were any factors possibly effecting involvement at the Centre that caused significant differences ($\leq .05$ on the chi-squared test) in parents' attitudes towards child development. The results are listed in the following table.

TABLE 9

FACTORS CAUSING SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Factors Possibly Effecting Involvement	Number of Significantly Different Items on the 65 Items in Interview Schedule No. 2
Personality (I/E Scale score)	2
Ethnic background	30
* Need for an interpreter	34
Socio-economic status	9
Years of contact with the Centre	13
* Previous work experience at the Centre (on roster in Parent-Teacher Co-operative)	0
Number of children	9
Number of school age children	5
* Having a "special needs" child	13
* Mother in paid employment	2
Distance from the Centre	3

* Numbers in contrast sample too small for chi-squared test to be statistically reliable.

DISCUSSION

This report covers part of a research project into the causes and consequences of parent involvement at the Lady Gowrie Child Centre (Adelaide), 1981. The Centre has an "open-door" policy towards parents and a wide range of means by which they can be involved, both inside and outside the nurseries. This section of the project explores possible reasons why parents differ in their degree of involvement.

The original observation of a wide variation in frequency and duration of involvement was born out in the analysis of the questionnaires (for reliability see p.7). Parents were involved in from 2 - 36 different ways and varied widely in the time they spent in involvement (see p.17 & 18).

The definition of involvement was wide; any activity connected with the Centre was included. "Informal" activities i.e. those for which there was no specific time appointed (e.g. "talking to other parents") made up 40% of the questionnaire and "formal" activities - for which there was a specific time and place (e.g. meetings) constituted 60% of the questionnaire. By this means, parents who disliked definite commitments were well catered for and all parents could feel that they were making a valued contribution when they filled out the questionnaires.

There were five major factors originally thought to have some bearing on the degree of involvement viz.

- attitudes to child development,
- attitudes towards parental involvement in education,
- personality,
- four ways in which experiences differed, (see p. 5)
- seven factors limiting the amount of time available for involvement (see p.6).

It was found that the majority of these factors did <u>not</u> relate to the frequency or duration of involvement. In six cases, however, the numbers were too small for the chi-squared test to be reliable (see Table 8, p.21) and the hypothesis needs to be retested on a larger sample.

The only two aspects which produced significant results were where the mother

- had previous experience of involvement (she tended to spend <u>more</u> time in involvement)
- was in paid employment (she tended to spend <u>less</u> time in involvement)

In both cases the numbers were too small for the chi-squared test to be reliable.

An interesting, but non-significant result, was that mothers with children in day care were more involved, both in frequency and duration of involvement than parents whose children were not in day care. (The numbers are again too small for the test to be reliable). This is partly explained by the fact that only 22% of the parents with children in day care were in paid employment, which was another unexpected finding.

It will be noted that the analysis of the results so far was by simple rather than compound factors e.g. distance from the Centre or having a school age child. The results may have been different if the factors were linked, i.e. distance and having a school age child in relation to frequency and duration of involvement. However, if this method had been adopted, the amount of material generated would have been enormously unwieldy and, at this stage at least, there is no reason to believe that it would be enlightening.

When the factors were tested to see whether they were independent variables, it was found that there was some link between some of the factors considered and the parents attitudes to child development, e.g. the relationship of the person interviewed to the child was linked with ten significantly differing attitudes towards child development (see Appendix X, p.56). Although the numbers of non-mothers were too small for the test to be reliable, the element of doubt was eliminated by only examining the maternal data which formed 92% of first term material.

Four other factors also had a reasonably large number of differentiating items on Interview Schedule No. 2 viz,

- differing ethnic background (30 items)
- the need for an interpreter (34 items)
- years of contact with the Centre (13 items)
- having a "special needs" child (13 items)

The L.G.C.C. is, however, made up of people of varying nationalities and abilities to speak English, who have been at the Centre varying lengths of time and have children with differing needs. No further reduction of the sample was therefore considered profitable if it were to remain representative of the total population. (These results are presented and discussed in Appendix X).

Only two of the above factors with high discriminating scores had sufficient numbers in the sample for the chi-squared test to be reliable, viz,

- differing ethnic background, (excluding aboriginal, see p.10)
- years of contact with the Centre (for justification of this as a single variable see p.64 & 65).

As neither of these factors caused differentiation in the degree of involvement, no difficulties arise in interpretation of the results.

Basically, the question of why parents become involved to differing degrees remains unanswered, although areas of further research have been indicated. The answer may lie in the parents own reasons for being/not being involved which were given in the answers to the "Parent Involvement in Education" interview (to be covered in a later report). It may be that the parent needs not to be involved, e.g. if the time is needed for study or relaxation. On the other hand, the answer may be that the "open'door" policy of the Centre (the professional side of the professional-parent dyad) also plays a part so that parents with different attitudes and beliefs, personalities, experience and time pressures can become involved. Certainly, involvement did not appear to be handicapped by the characteristics of the Centre in 1981 but still the open-door policy worked with some and not with others.

It seems reasonable to speculate at this stage that the answer may, at least in part, still lie with the parents. The measures used in this report are objective but removed to a certain extent from actual behaviour. In the "Parent Involvement in Education" interview (still to be published), the parents give their reasons for being or not being, involved in specific activities. The largely negative results of this present report may be due to experimental technique, in that variables are studied which are removed from actual behaviour. The implications of this would be that, if behaviour is to be understood, it must be examined as directly as possible.

These remarks are not intended to exclude the contribution of the professional arm of the dyad, but simply to note that, where the professional attitude is positively orientated, wide differences in frequency and duration of involvement still occur. It could still be, however, that at an individual level, conscious or unconscious, encouragement is given by staff to some persons to become involved rather than to others, e.g. on the basis of personality compatibility with different teachers.

At this stage of the project, however, the question remains open as to "Why (do) parents become involved to differing degrees at the L.G.C.C. (Adelaide)?" It is encouraging to note, however, that it does not seem

to lie in the factors which have been considered, for they are unalterables (e.g. the number of children in the family) or difficult to change (e.g. attitudes). If the answer to the basic question did lie here, it would be discouraging for those seeking to increase the degree of parental involvement at their Centre

Although this part of the overall project has not found the answers to the differing frequency and duration of parent involvement, it has -

1) indicated where answers do not lie, or are not likely to lie,
2) indicated areas where further research is needed,
3) produced other material which is not discussed in detail in the bulk of the report but which is of interest to professionals. These results and discussion are contained in Appendices VIII to X i.e.
   - the questionnaire on attitudes to child development (Interview Schedule No. 2)
   - personality (J.B. Rotter I/E Scale)
   - the interrelationship of factors possibly effecting involvement and attitudes to child development.

NOTES

LITERATURE SURVEY

1. In the United States, many Federal programmes have required participation of parents as a prerequisite for funding (Weibly, 1979). In other cases, mothers have been required to serve in the classroom as a condition of care for their children (Honig, 1975).

   Honig warns that this may not necessarily meet the greatest need of the parents, some of whom may need to advance their studies, work in paid employment (to support their children in many cases) or engage in other activities. A similar warning is given in relation to New Zealand Play Centres (McDonald, 1969).

THE PARENTS INTERVIEWED

1. Socio-Economic Status in Relationship to Distance Travelled

   (Term 1 sample)

	Local Area	Adjacent Area	Distant
Professional/Executive	4	5	18
Self employed	4	5	3
Clerical	0	0	6
Skilled	9	3	6
Semi-skilled	3	0	0
Unskilled	8	1	2
Student	0	0	2
Unemployed	3	1	0
Not applicable (single, separated etc.)	8	4	6
	39	19	43

2. As the number of single parent families in the community is increasing it might be expedient to develop a measure of socio-economic status that is not solely dependent on the occupation of the paternal parent.

3. "Adjacent" areas included -

Flinders Park
Kidman Park
Findon
West Hindmarsh
Underdale
Brooklyn Park
West Lakes

"Distant" areas included -

Lockleys
Henley Beach
Seaton
Netherby
North Adelaide
Highgate
Colonel Light Gardens.

APPENDICES

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE NO. 2 (from Russell & Russell 1982)

PARENTS

1. Let's talk about the influence you feel you have had and do now have over your children. In the case of your children, how much influence do you feel you (not both parents but you) have over the following (hand card and explain the categories).

		Little or no influence	Moderate influence	A Lot of influence	The most influence, more than anybody or anything else
11.	How good they are at school work	1	2	3	4
12.	Their sense of humour	1	2	3	4
13.	Their happiness	1	2	3	4
14.	How well behaved they are	1	2	3	4
15.	Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	1	2	3	4
16.	Their self control	1	2	3	4
17.	How well-mannered, neat and tidy they are	1	2	3	4
18.	How hard they try at school	1	2	3	4
19.	How curious or interested they are in how and why things happen	1	2	3	4
20.	How they act as a boy/girl	1	2	3	4
21.	Their physical fitness and health	1	2	3	4
22.	How good at sport they are	1	2	3	4
1.	How well they get along with children	1	2	3	4
2.	Their honesty	1	2	3	4
3.	Their attitudes and morals	1	2	3	4
4.	How much they are independent and stand up for themselves	1	2	3	4
5.	How much they are co-operative and share things	1	2	3	4
6.	How they express love and affection	1	2	3	4
7.	What type of job they will take up	1	2	3	4
8.	Their financial security in the future	1	2	3	4
9.	Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems	1	2	3	4
10.	Their imagination and creativity (e.g. drawing, painting, music)	1	2	3	4

Which of these do you think parents have the most influence over? (Show them the list and ask them to select the three main ones and rank 1, 2, 3)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE NO. 2

PARENTS

2. Let's talk about the influence you feel teachers have over your children. Not only the teacher this year, but teachers in general. How much influence do you feel teachers have over the following (hand card and explain the categories).

		Little or no influence	Moderate influence	A lot of influence	The most influence, more than anybody or anything else
11.	How they go at school	1	2	3	4
12.	Their sense of humour	1	2	3	4
13.	Their happiness	1	2	3	4
14.	How well behaved they are	1	2	3	4
15.	Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	1	2	3	4
16.	Their self control	1	2	3	4
17.	How well-mannered, neat and tidy they are	1	2	3	4
18.	How hard they try at school	1	2	3	4
19.	How curious or interested they are in how and why things happen	1	2	3	4
20.	How they act as a boy/girl	1	2	3	4
21.	Their physical fitness and health	1	2	3	4
22.	How good at sport they are	1	2	3	4
1.	How well they get along with cnildren	1	2	3	4
2.	Their honesty	1	2	3	4
3.	Their attitudes and morals	1	2	3	4
4.	How much they are independent	1	2	3	4
5.	How much they are co-operative and share things	1	2	3	4
6.	How they express love and affection	1	2	3	4
7.	What type of job they will take up	1	2	3	4
8.	Their financial security in the future	1	2	3	4
9.	Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems	1	2	3	4
10.	Their imagination and creativity (e.g. drawing, painting, music)	1	2	3	4

Which of these do you think teachers have the most influence over? (Show them the list and ask them to select the three main ones and rank 1, 2, 3)

.....

3. I would now like to talk about the kinds of characteristics in children that you see as important. That is, the things you would really like to see in your children, the things you emphasise and look for the most in them. (Show card and explain).

		Not important at all	Fairly unimportant	Fairly important	Very important
11.	Doing well at school	1	2	3	4
12.	Being happy	1	2	3	4
13.	Being well-behaved, doing what they are told	1	2	3	4
14.	Being sensitive to other people's needs and feelings	1	2	3	4
15.	Having self-control	1	2	3	4
16.	Being well-mannered and neat and tidy	1	2	3	4
17.	Trying hard at things they do	1	2	3	4
18.	Being curious and interested in how and why things happen	1	2	3	4
19.	Acting like a boy or girl	1	2	3	4
20.	Having good health and physical fitness	1	2	3	4
21.	Being good at sport	1	2	3	4
1.	Getting on well with other children	1	2	3	4
2.	Being honest	1	2	3	4
3.	Having good morals	1	2	3	4
4.	Being independent and able to stand up for themselves	1	2	3	4
5.	Being co-operative and sharing things	1	2	3	4
6.	Being able to express love and affection	1	2	3	4
7.	Having a good and secure job	1	2	3	4
8.	Having a good sense of humour	1	2	3	4
9.	Being able to work things out, to think and solve problems	1	2	3	4
10.	Having a good imagination and being creative	1	2	3	4

Are there any characteristics not listed here that you see as being very important?

.....

.....

Which of those listed above do you see as being the most important? (Show the list and see if you can get them to select three and rank 1, 2 and 3).

APPENDIX II

J.B. ROTTER I/E SCALE

Circle a. or b. for each question

1.	a.	Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too much.		
	b.	The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.	a	b
2.	a.	Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.		
	b.	People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.	a	b
3.	a.	One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.		
	b.	There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.	a	b
4.	a.	In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.		
	b.	Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he tries.	a	b
5.	a.	The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.		
	b.	Most students don't realise the extent to which their results are influenced by accidental happenings.	a	b
6.	a.	Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader.		
	b.	Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.	a	b
7.	a.	No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you.		
	b.	People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.	a	b
8.	a.	You are born with your personality.		
	b.	It is the experiences you have which determine what you are like.	a	b
9.	a.	I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.		
	b.	Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.	a	b
10.	a.	In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test.		
	b.	Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.	a	b

11.	a.	Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it.		
	b.	Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.	a	b
12.	a.	The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.		
	b.	This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.	a	b
13.	a.	When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.		
	b.	It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.	a	b
14.	a.	There are certain people who are just no good.		
	b.	There is some good in everybody.	a	b
15.	a.	In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.		
	b.	Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.	a	b
16.	a.	Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.		
	b.	Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability, luck has little or nothing to do with it.	a	b
17.	a.	As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control.		
	b.	By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.	a	b
18.	a.	Most people don't realise the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.		
	b.	There really is no such thing as "luck".	a	b
19.	a.	One should always be willing to admit mistakes.		
	b.	It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes.	a	b
20.	a.	It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.		
	b.	How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.	a	b
21.	a.	In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.		
	b.	Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.	a	b
22.	a.	With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption.		
	b.	It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.	a	b

23.	a.	Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the results they give.		
	b.	There is a direct connection between how hard I studied and the results I got.	a	b
24.	a.	A good leader expects people to decide for themselves.		
	b.	A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are.	a	b
25.	a.	Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.		
	b.	It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.	a	b
26.	a.	People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.		
	b.	There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.	a	b
27.	a.	There is too much emphasis on sport in high school.		
	b.	Team sports are an excellent way to build a character.	a	b
28.	a.	What happens is my own doing.		
	b.	Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.	a	b
29.	a.	Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.		
	b.	In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.	a	b

APPENDIX III

Code ☐☐☐

L.G.C.C., (Adelaide)

School age child/older? ☐☐

June-July, 1981

Yes No

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

1. What part do you think parents play in their child(ren)'s education at

   (a) pre-school

   (b) school?

2. What part do you think teachers play in your child(ren)'s education at

   (a) pre-school

   (b) school?

3. In what ways do you want to be involved with your children's education at

   (a) this Centre

   (b) school?

4. Are you satisfied with the range of opportunities available for parent involvement at

   (a) this Centre

   (b) at school?

5. Do you feel your involvement is welcomed at

   (a) this Centre

   (b) school?

6. (a) There are a variety of ways you can be involved at this Centre to suit as many people as possible. Of these ways, you have been involved in

.....this year.

How did this come about?

(b) Do you see any benefit/gain from .....

(i) to yourself

(ii) your child(ren)

(iii) the Centre?

7. (a) Of the various ways you can be involved, you do not seem to have

.....this year.

How did this come about?

(b) Do you see any benefit/gain from not .....

(i) to yourself

(ii) to your child(ren)

(iii) to the Centre?

8. If you felt your involvement didn't help the teachers and <u>didn't</u> help your child, would you think you should do it?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION

APPENDIX IV

NOVEMBER, 1981 PARENTS AT THE L.G.C.C. ADELAIDE Code No.

Please tick in the appropriate box(es) -

	P/C/T Group (Playgroup)	A Nursery	B Nursery	C Nursery	Afternoon Group
My child(ren) is/are in					

	Yes	No.
My child(ren) stay(s) in Day Care		

I have other children of -	Yes	No
pre-school age		
school age		
who have grown up		

The answers to the following questins will give an overview of parent activity in the Centre. The first two columns need a tick (yes) or cross (no) and the last two need a number which you will be able to work out from the separate card given to you.

INFORMAL ACTIVITIES

	In the past two weeks	In the past year of 1981	How often have you done this?	How long did it take you?
In the nursery, have you				
(1) Stayed to settle your child(ren)?				(1)
(2) Stayed for part of tne session when not on roster?				(2)
(3) Stayed throughout the session when not on roster?				(3)
(4) Helped the teacher with the programme when not on the roster?				(4)
(5) Eaten lunch with your own child when not on the roster?				(5)
(6) Helped with the lunch programme when not on the roster?				(6)
(7) Brought useful waste materials for pasting, hammering etc?				(7)
(8) Prepared materials for the teacher (at the Centre or at home)?				(8)
(9) Brought items of interest to the nursery?				(9)
(10) Done sewing for the nursery (at Centre or at home)?				(10)

	In the past two weeks	In the past year of 1981	How often have you done this?	How long did it take you?	
(11) Used the Parents' Room?					(11)
Helped -					
(12) (a) in the kitchen when not on roster?					(12)
(13) (b) when staff absent?					(13)
(14) (c) in the garden?					(14)
(15) (d) with the typing?					(15)
(16) (e) with the shopping?					(16)
Borrowed from -					
(17) (a) the Toy Library?					(17)
(18) (b) the Children's Book Library?					(18)
(19) (c) the Parents' Library					(19)
(20) Raised money on your own initiative?					(20)
(21) Transported other children to the Centre?					(21)
(22) Talked to staff about your child(ren)'s progress or behaviour?					(22)
(23) Talked to other parents?					(23)
(24) In any other way?					(24)
FORMAL ACTIVITIES					
Have you					
(25) Attended dental inspection with your child?					(25)
(26) Taken your child for follow up?					(26)
(27) Attended medical inspection with your child?					(27)
(28) Attended Orientation Day (1st day of Term I)?					(28)
(29) Come to "Open House" (1st Monday in each month in Term I)?					(29)
(30) Come to the Centre's Annual General Meeting in October?					(30)
(31) Interpreted for non-English speaking parents?					(31)
Nurseries					
(32) (a) assisted in morning programme on roster in C nursery?					(32)
(33) (b) helped on lunch roster? (a.m. nurseries only)					(33)

	In the past two weeks	In the past year of 1981	How often have you done this?	How long did it take you?
(34) (c) done washing for the nursery?				(34)
(35) (d) helped with the Easter activities (A Nursery)				(35)
(36) (e) discussed the planning of the programme with the teacher at the beginning of term?				(36)
(37) (f) discussed the effectiveness of the programme with the teacher at the end of term?				(37)
(38) (g) accompanied the children on excursion? (During term or holidays or both)				(38)
(39) (h) brought child(ren) to the film day in the holidays? (Sept. 9th)				(39)
(40) (i) been involved with the cooking in A nursery in Term 2?				(40)
(41) (j) been involved with multicultural cooking in the nursery in Term 3?				(41)
(42) (k) any other way?.....				(42)
Kitchen				
(43) Helped in the kitchen on roster?				(43)
(44) Helped with the Vietnamese lunch?				(44)
Parents' Committee				
(45) On Committee (i.e. office bearer or nursery representative)?				(45)
(46) Attended Parents' Committee meetings? (i.e. came to meetings)				(46)
(47) Come to the Special Parent Meetings in October?				(47)
(48) Helped on working bee? (Cleaning out the shed)				(48)
(49) Came to, or helped with Parent Dinner (June), or other special functions?				(49)
Fundraisers				
(50) Helped with/contributed to/ came to Cake Days? (May 1 & August 14)				(50)
(51) Attended/helped with Friends of the Lady Gowrie Child Centre Mannequin Parade?				(51)

		In the past two weeks	In the past year of 1981	How often have you done this?	How long did it take you?
(52)	Brought your child(ren) to the Family Film Night? (July 31)				(52)
(53)	Come to the Melbourne Cup Luncheon				(53)
(54)	Sold raffle tickets?				(54)
	Parents' Programmes				
(55)	Attended water safety and swimming course?				(55)
(56)	Attended "Communicating with Children" class (Greek and Italian - run by D.F.E.)?				(56)
(57)	Come to cooking classes? (Term 1)				(57)
(58)	Come to talk on "How to talk to your children about sex"? (by Carol Ross)				(58)
(59)	Come to "Child Safety" talk? (July 9 - Mrs. Whitelaw)				(59)
(60)	Come to the "Fly on the Wall" session with the Director? (A, B and Afternoon groups)				(60)
	Is there -				
(61)	Any other way in wich you were involved with the Centre? If so, please state in what way				(61)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

APPENDIX V

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

The Lady Gowrie Child Centre carries out research programmes. The aim is to learn more about young children, parents and their needs, so that better provision can be made in the community for child development. No names are used in any research reports.

I agree to assist in any research projects and for my child to be involved when necessary.

.....

Mother or Father

As part of the programmes, photographs, either still or movie film, are sometimes taken to emphasise certain teaching points or aspects of child development. These may be published (excluding the child's full name). They may be used for educational and publicity purposes.

I agree to permit photographs and film to be taken and used for the above purposes.

.....

Mother or Father

APPENDIX VI

FURTHER WAYS IN WHICH PARENTS COULD BE INVOLVED

1. Bringing clothing for use in the nursery.

2. Washing tablecloths.

3. Cleaning and tidying e.g. kitchen and pantry (i.e. parts of Centre other than nursery).

4. Talking to people about the Centre.

5. Putting up shelving (at weekends).

6. Suggesting ideas for fund raising

7. Bathing baby (in front of children).

APPENDIX VII

FACTORS EFFECTING DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

1. Attitudes to Education ("Parent Involvement in Education")

TABLE 10

ATTITUDES TO EDUCATION AND DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

Group	Average Mean *	
	Frequency of Involvement	Duration of Involvement
1	1.67	1.67
2	1.91	1.82
3	1.5	1.5
4	2.25	1.5

* The lower the score the greater the involvement

2. Previous Work Experience at the Centre (in Parent/Teacher Co-operative)

TABLE 11

PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE AND DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

Experience?	Average Mean *	
	Frequency of Involvement	Duration of Involvement
Yes	Differences were not statistically significant	1.7
No		2.7

* The lower the score the greater the involvement

3. Parents with Children in Day Care

TABLE 12

CHILDREN IN DAY CARE AND DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

Day Care?	Average Mean *	
	Frequency of Involvement	Duration of Involvement
Yes (9)	1.87	1.78
No (46)	2.52	1.96

* The lower the score the greater the involvement

4. Mothers in Paid Employment

TABLE 13

MOTHER IN PAID EMPLOYMENT AND DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

Mother Employed?	Average Mean *	
	Frequency of Involvement	Duration of Involvement
Yes	Differences not statistically significant	2.7
No		1.8

* The lower the score the greater the involvement

APPENDIX VIII

RESULTS OF ATTITUDES TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE NO. 2

A summary of the items and results of this questionaire is to be found in Table 14 where the items are presented with the average mean frequency alongside.

The values given to the categories were,

Little or no influence/not important at all, ... (1)

Moderate influence/fairly unimportant, ... (2)

A lot of influence/fairly important ..... (3)

The most influence, more than anybody or anything else/very important. ..... (4)

Consequently, the higher the score, the greater the influence or, in the case of the children's characteristics, the emphasis.

TABLE 14

SUMMARY OF SCORES ON INTERVIEW SCHEDULE NO. 2

Item	Average Mean Frequencies		
	Parents' Influence	Teacher's Influence	Characteristics Emphasised
Ability with school work	2.8 →	3.0 *	3.4
Sense of humour	2.6 ←	2.1	3.2
Happiness	3.4 *←	2.4	3.9 *
Behaviour	2.9 ←	2.5	3.4
Sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	3.0 ←	2.3	3.6
Self control	2.6 ←	2.3	3.6
Behaviour and neatness	3.1 ←	2.1	3.3
How hard they try at school	2.8 =	2.8	-
Trying hard at things they do	-	-	3.5
Curiosity and interest	3.0 ←	2.9 *	3.4
Acting as a boy/girl	2.8 ←	2.1	2.8
Physical fitness and health	3.3 *←	2.1	3.7 *
Ability at sport	2.4 ←	2.2	2.5
Getting along with other children	2.9 ←	2.6	3.4
Honesty	3.3 *←	2.4	3.8 *
Attitudes and morals	3.2 ←	2.3	3.7 *
Independence and standing up for themselves	3.0 ←	2.1	3.6
Co-operation and sharing	3.0 ←	2.6	3.6
Expressing love and affection	3.3 *←	1.8	3.7 *
Future job	2.2 →	2.4	3.3
Future financial security	2.7 ←	1.7	-
Ability to work things out	2.9 ←	2.8	3.6
Imagination and creativity	2.8 →	3.0 *	3.2

* Highest scores N = 101

The arrow shows the direction of the highest score.

N.B. The higher the score, the greater the influence or emphasis.

Summary of Scores on Interview Schedule No. 2 (continued)

N.B. An overall examination of the preceding scores shows that,

1) In the majority of cases ($\frac{19}{22}$), the mothers have rated their influence over their children as being greater than the teacher's influence.

2) Where the teacher's influence is regarded as greater, it is only very slightly so. This would probably surprise many teachers considering the nature of some of the items.

3) The mother's influence is in the region of "moderate" to "a lot". The teacher's is generally in the region of "moderate" ($\frac{18}{22}$ items).

It would be interesting to know what agency is regarded as having "the most" influence.

4) Most characteristics ($\frac{19}{21}$) which are emphasised in children are regarded as being "fairly important". This suggests that, overall, the demands made of children are fairly high.

5) The parents emphasised the most characteristics over which they have the most influence (with one exception). In no case do they emphasise the most characteristics over which they regard teachers as having the most influence.

TABLE 15

PARENTS' INFLUENCE ON THEIR CHILDREN

((Ranking from Interview Schedule No. 2)

Item	Average Mean Frequency		Order of Frequency of Mention
Their happiness	3.4		1
Their physical fitness and health	3.3	)	
Their honesty	3.3	)	= 2
How they express love and affection	3.3	)	

TABLE 16

PARENTS' RANKING OF ITEMS OVER WHICH THEY HAVE THE MOST INFLUENCE

	Item Most Frequently Ranked...	% of Mentions
FIRST	Their attitudes and morals	20.8
SECOND	How they express love and affection	13.9
THIRD	(Their ability to work things out, (to think, reason and solve problems	
	(How well-mannered, neat and tidy (they are	10.9

N.B. 1) Only one item is mentioned in both tables viz "How they express love and affection." This lack of agreement may arise from the different criteria used for assessment in each case. In the body of the test, the parents are considering their own individual influence. When they are asked to rank the items, it is in terms of parents in general - including the paternal parent and probably a concept of parental influence in the community as a whole.

(The same argument would apply when the most important characteristics emphasised in children are assessed where again only one item is sound in both tables) (Tables 19 & 20).

If this argument is valid, the scores on the parents' perception of the teacher's influence and the parents' rankings of the items over which they perceive teachers as having the most influence should largely agree, as here the criteria for assessment both involve the mothers' opinions. An examination of Tables 17 and 18 shows this to be the case.

A further conclusion that could be inferred here is that the concensus between mothers is greater than the concensus between mothers and fathers in the same family. This is in agreement with other findings. (Russell & Russell, 1972).

2) The items ranked by the parents cover a range of personal, moral, physical and intellectual aspects of child development.

TABLE 17

TEACHERS' INFLUENCE ON THE CHILDREN

(Ranking from Interview Schedule No. 2)

Item	Average Mean Frequency	Order of Frequency of Mention
Now they go at school	3.0)	= 1
Their imagination and creativity (e.g. drawing, painting and music)	3.0)	
How curious or interested they are in how or why things happen	2.9	3

TABLE 18

PARENTS' RANKING OF ITEMS OVER WHICH TEACHERS HAVE THE MOST INFLUENCE

Item most frequently ranked...		% of Mentions
FIRST	How they go at school	23.8
SECOND	Now curious or interested they are in how and why things happen	15.8
= THIRD	Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems)	
	Their imagination and creativity (e.g. drawing, painting or music))	14.9

1. Here, as has been noted (p.51), the agreement between the two tables is marked, "Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems" in Table 18 is the only new item.

2. The teachers are considered to have most influence in the intellectual and aesthetic realm.

TABLE 19

CHILDREN'S CHARACTERISTICS EMPHASISED BY PARENTS

(Ranking from Interview Schedule No. 2)

Item	Average Mean Frequency	Order of Frequency of Mention
Being happy	3.9	1
Being honest	3.8	2
Having good health and physical fitness	3.7	= 3
Having good morals	3.7	
Being able to express love and affection	3.7	

TABLE 20

PARENTS' RANKING OF CHARACTERISTICS WHICH THEY EMPHASISED MOST IN CHILDREN

Item most frequently ranked...		% of Mentions
FIRST	Being happy	26.7
SECOND	Being independent and able to stand up for themselves	11.9
THIRD	Being sensitive to other people's needs and feelings	9.9

1. Only one item, "Being happy", is found in both these tables (see p.51) and in both cases receives the most mentions. This agrees with the findings in Russell's 1980 study, which was done at this Centre. Four of the items in the first five in his study reappear in the upper table - the exception being "Having good morals which did not rank highly in Russell's study. Only two items ("Being happy" and "Being sensitive to other people's needs and feelings") in the lower table overlap with that study.

2. Parents emphasise most the personal, moral and physical aspects of child development.

FURTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN SEEN AS IMPORTANT

The mothers were also asked to list any characteristics of children that they considered important but which were not already mentioned in the questionnaire.

(The 28 suggestions made fell into eight categories which are listed below in order of frequency of mention.

N.B. Some characteristics were not seen as synonyms for those already on the list, e.g. "Internalised standards" could be considered as synonymous with the "Having good morals" of the questionnaire.)

It is interesting that 5/8 of these categories involve personal/interpersonal relationships.

TABLE 21

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN SEEN AS IMPORTANT

Item	No. of Mentions
Good relationships with others	7
Good relationship with oneself	6
Good relationship with parents	4
Individuality of personality	3
Ability to communicate	3
Internalised standards	2
Good relationships with adults other than parents	2
Specific ability seen as desirable (musical)	1
	28

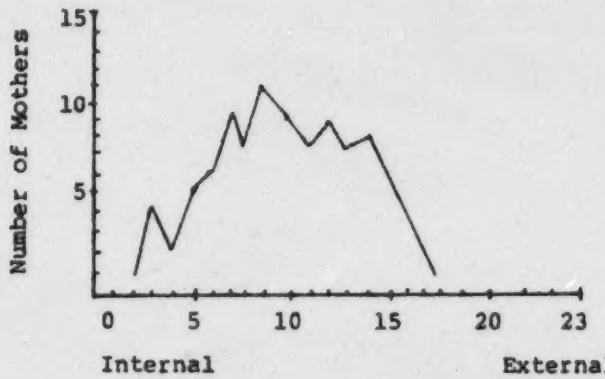
To have mentioned any extra characteristic was uncommon, only 21/101 mothers did. The usual response was confusion and a statement to the effect that everything seemed to be covered. To be able to think clearly and verbalise under these circumstances would, therefore, suggest that the opinions were strongly held and were a conscious part of the parent's philosophy.

APPENDIX IX

RESULTS OF J.B. ROTTER I/E SCALE

Due to difficulties of interpretation, one mother did not attempt this scale, leaving 100 mothers in the sample. The distribution of scores was wide (2 - 18 out of a possible range of 0 - 23).

J.B. ROTTER I/E SCALE SCORES



If 12 is taken as an approximate midpoint of the scale, it can be seen that more mothers at the Centre tend towards the internal end of the scale than the external (72 : 28) i.e. more mothers, at the Centre, see themselves as being in control of their lives than being under the control of chance influences.

APPENDIX X

INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF FACTORS POSSIBLY EFFECTING INVOLVEMENT AND ATTITUDES TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT

a) Relationship to the Child

There were 101 mothers, 6 fathers, 2 grandmothers and 1 aunt in the original sample i.e. 9 non-mothers. With such a small contrast sample the chi-squared test is unreliable, nevertheless it can be said that most differentiating items were on the parents' opinion of the influence of the teacher (6/10 items) where the 9 non-mothers rated the teacher's influence as higher than did the mothers. (See Table 22).

TABLE 22

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Items Scoring Significantly Differently on Interview Schedule No. 2	Average Mean Frequency Mothers (101)		Others (9)
1. Influence of the parent figure (i.e. the person most involved with the child)			
- How curious or interested they are in how and why things happen	2.5	←	2.4
- How much they are co-operative and share things	3.0	→	3.1
- How they express love and affection	3.3	←	3.0
2. Influence of the teacher			
- Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	2.3	→	2.9
- Their self control	2.3	→	3.1
- How well-mannered, neat and tidy they are	2.1	→	3.0
- Their physical fitness and health	2.1	→	3.0
- Their honesty	2.4	→	3.2
- How they express love and affection	1.8	→	2.6
3. Characteristics of children emphasised			
- Their physical fitness and health	2.5	→	3.0

N.B. The higher the score the greater the influence or emphasis. The direction of the arrow indicates the higher score.

ALL FURTHER ANALYSIS WAS CARRIED OUT ON THE SAMPLE OF 101 MOTHERS ONLY

b) Differing Ethnic Background

In the sample of 101 mothers,

66 were Australian (N.B. Aboriginals not included)

35 were non-Australian

The "non-Australian" category was adopted as several of the countries had few, in several cases only one, representative at the Centre (see Table 1).

Two (2) Vietnamese and one (1) Australian omitted parts of the questionnaires, on the teachers influence on aspects of child development, because of their lack of familiarity with the Australian situation, in the first two cases, and the present situation in the latter case.

The comparison of Australian and non-Australian upon attitudes towards aspects of child development is detailed on the next page.

TABLE 23

ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Items Scoring Significantly Differently on Interview Schedule No. 2	Average Mean Frequency			Variation in Number Answering
	Australian (n = 66)		Other (n = 35)	
1. Mother's Influence				
- Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	3.1	←	2.9	
- How well mannered, neat and tidy they are	3.0	→	3.3	
- How well they get along with children	2.8	→	3.0	
- How much they are independent and stand up for themselves	3.0	=	3.0	
- How they express love and affection	3.4	←	2.9	
2. Teacher's Influence				
- How they go at school	3.0	←	2.9	34/35
- Their sense of humour	2.0	→	2.2	34/35
- Their happiness	2.4	→	2.5	34/35
- How well behaved they are	2.6	←	2.5	34/35
- Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	2.3	=	2.3	34/35
- Their self-control	2.3	→	2.4	34/35
- How curious or interested they are in how and why things happen	2.9	←	2.8	34/35
- Their physical fitness and health	2.1	→	2.2	34/35
- How well they get along with children	1.3	→	2.6	34/35
- Their honesty	2.4	←	2.3	34/35
- Their attitudes and morals	2.3	→	2.5	34/35
- How much they are independent and stand up for themselves	2.1	→	2.2	65/66) 34/35)
- How much they are co-operative and share things	2.6	=	2.6	34/35
- How they express love and affection	1.8	→	1.9	33/35
- What type of job they will take up	2.4	→	2.5	33/35
- Their financial security in the future	1.8	→	1.9	33/35
- Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems	2.9	←	2.8	33/35
- Their imagination and creativity e.g. drawing, painting or music.	3.0	←	2.9	34/35
3. Characteristics of Children Emphasised by Mothers				
- Doing well at school	3.4	←	3.3	
- Being able to express love and affection	3.7	←	3.5	
- Having a good and secure job	3.3	→	3.4	

N.B. The higher the score the greater the influence or emphasis. The direction of the arrows is that of the highest score.

The most striking feature of the preceding table is the large number of items (18/26) where Australians and non-Australians differ in their opinion of the influence the teacher has on the child. Except for one item ("How well they get along with children"), the differences are however very small (0.1 - 0.2). Two are apparently non existent ("Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings" and "How much they are co-operative and share things.") This arises because average mean frequencies are being used. The distribution of the original frequencies gave rise to the significant differences, as will be seen later.

Further examination shows that, again, both Australian and non-Australian mothers generally regard their influence as higher than that of the teachers on the same items. Australian parents tend to regard their influence as greater on emotional aspects of a child's development, whereas non-Australians regard their influence as greater on behavioural aspects. A great percentage of non-Australians (31.4% to 22.7%) regarded themselves as having the greatest influence over "How much they are independent and stand up for themselves", even though the average mean frequency is equal.

When the items differentiating between Australians and non-Australians opinions of the teachers' influence are considered, it will be seen that Australians think teachers have more influence over the intellectual, behavioural, moral (honesty) and aesthetic aspects of child development than do non-Australians. Non-Australians think teachers have a greater influence over a wider range of items (10 : 6), which relate to the emotional, physical, social and moral (attitudes and morals) aspects of a child's development and his/her future employment and job security. The average means are equal on "Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings" but a greater proportion of Australians think that the teachers have "a lot" of influence over this aspect and a greater proportion of non-Australians think they only have "moderate" influence. The reverse situation applies to "How much they are co-operative and share things" where the means were again equal. Here more Australians thought that the teachers had only "moderate" influence and more non-Australians thought that they had "a lot".

Non-Australians thought that they and the teachers had more influence over "How well they get along with children" than Australians. Even so, the parents regarded their own influence as greater than the teachers.

Australians and non-Australians agreed more than they differed on the characteristics they emphasised in children (as they had on parental influence on aspects of child development). In this case only 3/21 items differentiated between the group. The Australians placed more emphasis on some intellectual and emotional aspects than did non-Australians, and the non-Australians emphasised future employment. This may be a reflection of their relative newness to the country as much as a non-Australian characteristic.

The remaining four items that differentiated between Australians and non-Australians were in their ranking of items in order of influence or emphasis, as can be seen below.

TABLE 24

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN PARENTS' RANKINGS - AUSTRALIAN AND NON-AUSTRALIAN

Australian	Non-Australian
Parental influence greatest on	
1. Their happiness	1. * Their attitudes and morals
= 2. Their honesty	= 2. Their happiness
= 2. * How they express love and affection	= 2. * How well-mannered, neat and tidy they are
Teachers' influence greatest on	
2. * Their ability to work things out, to think reason and solve problems	2. * How they go at school
Greatest parental emphasis on	
1. Their sense of humour	1. Their sense of humour

* Items found on total group rankings (Tables 16, 18 & 20).

Agreement Within Nationalities

Although the average mean frequency is given in Table 23, it should be stated that the range of opinions within national groups was wide, particularly among the Australians (see the table below).

TABLE 25

AMOUNT OF INTRA-NATIONAL DISAGREEMENT

Nationality	Average Number of Columns Covered (There were 4 columns i.e. opinions that could be expressed)
Australian (n = 66)	4.0
Greek (6) (n = 6)	2.9
British (11) (n = 11)	3.4
Yugoslav (4) (n = 4)	2.5

N.B. The other national groups had too few representatives to calculate in this way

This wide range of opinions may arise numerically because the Australians were the largest group and therefore had the greatest numerical opportunity for diversity of opinion. It might also be that in our multicultural society there is a wider range of opinion than would be found in other socieities.

c) The Need for an Interpreter

The mothers who needed an interpreter can be regarded as a special case of being non-Australian. Unfortunately their numbers are too small (6) for the chi-squared test to be reliable. The results are found in Table 26 and again the most striking feature is that the greatest number of differentiating items involve the teachers' influence on aspects of the child's development (22/34 items). It would appear that those who need interpreters place greater emphasis on the teachers' influence (19/22 items) than those who do not. However, as has been indicated, no definite conclusions can be drawn.

TABLE 26

THE NEED FOR AN INTERPRETER AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Items Scoring Significantly Differently on Interview Schedule No. 2	Average Mean Frequency			Variation in Number Answering
	Interp. not Needed n = 95		Interp. Needed n = 6	
1. Mothers' influence				
- Their happiness	3.4	←	2.7	
- Their physical fitness and health	3.3	←	2.8	
- How they express love and affection	3.3	←	2.7	
2. Teachers' influence				
- How they go at school	3.0	→	3.6	5/6
- Their sense of humour	2.1	→	2.4	5/6
- Their happiness	2.3	→	3.4	5/6
- How well-behaved they are	2.5	→	3.4	5/6
- Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	2.2	→	3.0	5/6
- Their self-control	2.3	→	2.4	5/6
- How well-mannered, neat and tidy they are	2.1	→	2.8	5/6
- How hard they try at school	2.9	←	2.8	5/6
- How curious or interested they are in how and why things happen	2.9	←	2.8	5/6
- How they act as a boy/girl	2.2	→	2.4	5/6
- Their physical fitness and health	2.1	→	2.6	5/6
- How good at sport they are	2.2	→	2.6	5/6
- How well they get along with children	2.6	→	3.0	5/6
- Their honesty	2.4	→	2.6	5/6
- Their attitudes and morals	2.3	→	2.8	5/6
- How much they are independent and stand up for themselves	2.1	→	2.4	5/6
- How much they are co-operative and share things	2.6	→	3.2	5/6
- How they express love and affection	1.8	→	2.5	4/6
- What type of job they will take up	2.4	→	2.5	4/6
- Their financial security in the future	1.6	→	2.8	4/6
- Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems	2.9	←	2.8	4/6
- Their imagination and creativity, e.g. drawing, painting or music	3.0	→	3.2	5/6

P.T.O.

TABLE 26 (continued)

Items Scoring Significantly Differently on Interview Schedule No. 2	Average Mean Frequency		Variation in Number Answering
	Interp. not Needed n = 95	Interp. Needed n = 6	
3. Characteristics of children emphasised by mothers			
- Being happy	3.9 ←	3.7	
- Having self-control	3.6 ←	3.2	
- Being co-operative and sharing things	3.6 ←	3.2	
- Being able to express love and affection	3.7 ←	3.0	
- Being able to work things out, to think and solve problems	3.7 ←	3.0	

N.B. The higher the score the greater the influence or emphasis.

The direction of the arrows is that of the highest score.

TABLE 27

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN PARENTS' RANKINGS - INTERPRETER NEEDED AND NOT NEEDED

Interpreter Not Needed n = 95	Interpreter Needed n = 6
Parental influence greatest on	
1. Their happiness	1. Their attitudes and morals
3. Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems	= 3. -How well they get along with children
	-Their attitudes and morals
	-How good they are at school work
	-Their sense of humour
	-How well-mannered, neat and tidy they are
	-How they act as a boy/girl
Teachers' influence greatest on	
1. How good they are at school work	= 1. -Their honesty
	-Their ability to work things out, to think, reason and solve problems
	-How well they get along with children
	-Their happiness
	-How well-behaved they are
	-Their physical fitness and health

d) Years of Contact with the Centre

As can be seen from Table 3 (p. 13) although 40% of the mothers are in their first six months of contact with the Centre, some have been there a very long time - 16% have been there three years or more.

This measure of "length of contact with the Centre" was regarded somewhat dubiously at first as it was argued that it was possibly a conglomerate of a number of items. A parent with a number of children, particularly pre-school age children, would be reasonably expected o have a longer period of contact with the Centre. Similarly a mother with a "special needs" child may be longer in contact with the Centre. On the other hand, if the family's socio-economic status placed a particular value on education the parent may be longer in contact with the Centre - if changes of residence did not preclude this. If "the length of contact with the Centre" was a conglomerate item, it would be expected that the items which discriminated between parents' attitudes to child development in the Interview Schedule No. 2 would overlap, but, as can be seen from the following table, this did not happen.

TABLE 28

"YEARS OF CONTACT" AS AN INDEPENDENT FACTOR

Discriminating Items on Interview Schedule No. 2

Years of Contact	Number of Children (9) *	Number of Pre-School Children (5)	"Special Needs" Children (13)	Socio-Economic Status (9)
Maternal influence on				
- Their happiness				
- How well-behaved they are				
- Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings				
- How good at sport they are				
- How much they are independent and stand up for themselves		✓		
Maternal emphasis on				
- Having self-control				
- Trying hard at things they do				
- Being good at sport				✓
- Being co-operative and sharing things				
- Being able to express love and affection			✓	
- Being able to work things out to think and solve problems			✓	
- Having a good imagination and being creative				

* Total number of items discriminating between parents attitudes to child development on Interview Schedule No. 2

It can reasonably but tentatively be concluded, therefore, that "years of contact with the Centre" is an independent variable although it is recognised that contact with the Centre is not the only influence on attitudes.

Although 13 items differentiated between mothers who had varying degrees of contact with the Centre in their attitudes towards child development, no clear picture emerged when the results were examined in their six monthly groupings. To clarify the issue, therefore, the responses of mothers who had been at the Centre for less than six months were compared with those who had been there two years or more. The results can be seen in the following table.

TABLE 29

YEARS OF CONTACT WITH THE CENTRE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Items Scoring Significantly Differently on Interview Schedule No. 2	Average Mean Frequency		
	0-5 Months Contact n = 40		24 or More Months Contact n = 28
1. Maternal influence on			
- Their happiness	3.3	→	3.4
- How well-behaved they are	3.0	←	2.8
- Their sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings	3.1	←	3.0
- How good at sport they are	2.5	→	2.9
- How much they are independent and stand up for themselves	2.9	→	3.0
3. Characteristics of children emphasised by mothers			
- Having self-control	3.6	←	3.5
- Trying hard at things they do	3.5	→	3.7
- Being good at sport	2.8	=	2.8
- Being co-operative and sharing things	3.5	→	3.6
- Being able to express love and affection	3.6	←	3.5
- Being able to work things out, to think and solve problems	3.6	=	3.6
- Having a good imagination and being creative	3.3	←	3.1

N.B. The higher the score the greater the influence or emphasis.
The arrows show the direction of the highest score.

Although the differences in the average mean frequencies are small (average difference 0.2), they represent a significant shift in emphasis. It would appear that the mothers who have been longest in contact with the Centre consider that they have more influence over their children's happiness, sporting prowess and independence than mothers who have had little contact. Conversely, they consider that they have <u>less</u> influence over their children's behaviour and sensitivity to other people's needs and feelings.

From the lack of discriminating items concerning the teachers' influence over child development, it would appear that parents with short-term and long-term contact are in agreement over the teachers' degree of influence.

Parents who have been at the Centre longest emphasise "trying hard at things they do" and "being co-operative and sharing things" more than parents who have been there a short time. They also place less emphasis on "self control","being able to express love and affection" and "having a good imagination and being creative". The rationale behind this is unclear but may be related to preparation for the school environment.

Two items have the same mean average frequency. When the items are examined in more detail, the parents who have been there longer placed less emphasis on "being good at sport" and "being able to work things out, to think and solve problems" than do parents with little contact with the Centre.

There was only one item in the parents' ranking of items that discriminated between parents with short and long-term contact. When the parents ranked the items they thought that they had most influence over, the second choice differed. Although both sets of parents placed "their honesty" second, short term parents ranked "how they express love and affection" equal second and long term parents opted for "how much they are independent and stand up for themselves".

As has been mentioned previously, the interpretation of these results is not straightforward.

e) Parents Having "Special Needs" Children

As only ten parents had "special needs" children, the number is too small for the chi-squared test to be reliable. From Table 30 it can be seen that, of the eleven items discriminating between parents with and without "special needs" children, the majority (8/11) are concerned with intellectual and behavioural characteristics.

No firm conclusions can be drawn, however, because of the small size of the sample.

TABLE 30

PARENTS HAVING "SPECIAL NEEDS" CHILDREN AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Items Scoring Significantly Differently on Interview Schedule No. 2	Average Mean Frequency		
	No "Special Needs" Children n = 91		With "Special Needs" Children n = 10
1. Maternal influence on			
- How good they are at school work	2.8	→	3.9
- How hard they try at school	2.9	←	2.3
- Their attitudes and morals	3.3	←	2.8
2. Teachers' influence on			
- How well-behaved they are	2.5	→	2.7
- How curious or interested they are in how and why things happen	2.9	←	2.7
- Their attitudes and morals	2.3	→	2.5
- Their imagination and creativity e.g. in drawing, painting or music	3.0	←	2.8
3. Characteristics emphasised in children			
- Doing well at school	3.4	←	2.9
- Being able to express love and affection	3.7	←	3.2
- Having a good and secure job	3.4	←	3.0
- Being able to work things out, to think and solve problems	3.6	←	3.5

N.B. The higher the score, the greater the influence or emphasis.

The arrows indicate the direction of the highest score.

TABLE 31

SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN PARENTS' RANKINGS - "SPECIAL NEEDS" OR NO "SPECIAL NEEDS" CHILDREN

Parents Without "Special Needs" Children	Parents with "Special Needs" Children
Teachers' influence on	
= 1. How they go at school	1. How they go at school
= 1. How hard they try at school	
Characteristics emphasised in children	
3. Being independent and able to stand up for themselves	= 3. Being happy
	= 3. Being sensitive to other people's needs and feelings

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